

The 2023 Africana Studies-University of Maryland, Baltimore County (AFST-UMBC) Biennial International Conference

The Africana Studies Department, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, USA, Announces its Second Biennial International Conference on “African Women, Civil Wars, and Peacebuilding,” to be held at the UMBC Main Campus, May 17-18, 2023

Since the 1960s, 22 of the 54 African countries have witnessed civil wars that resulted in mass violence, displacement and refugee crises, economic and infrastructural destruction, and political and regional instability. Caused by complex historical drivers and experiences rooted in the colonial legacy of fragile constitutional and institutional structures, ill-prepared political leadership, sectarianism, ethnonationalism, religious intolerance, poverty and inequality, and stiff competition for scarce resources, among other factors, the wars have had devastating impacts on Africans especially women. African women have been embroiled in armed conflicts as civilians—fleeing the hostilities, searching for refuge, and struggling to protect and feed their families. They have also been active participants in the battlefields as combatants, militia members, companions of male fighters, carriers of food, supplies, weapons and information, medical practitioners attending to the sick and the wounded, and spies undertaking dangerous espionage missions. They have worked as dedicated diplomats educating and currying continental and international support and mobilizing human and material resources for their causes.

Civil wars disproportionately affected women in terms of their access to resources, their participation in the decision-making processes of postwar rehabilitation, and the degree of their reintegration in postwar society. The militarization and sexualized violence engendered by the civil wars in Africa have also affected women and their daughters disproportionately. While armed conflicts turned women’s bodies into sites of violence as well as of resistance, they also highlighted women’s resilience and agency in protecting and feeding families, helping communities survive, and exploiting socioeconomic and political opportunities engendered by the hostilities. We invite paper and panel proposals that apply critical interdisciplinary and gendered perspectives to analyze the complex and diverse experiences of African women in prewar, wartime, and postwar societies. Proposals that also explore the complex forms and effects of violence against women and girls in wartimes and immediate postwar zones, and help crack the silence and secrecy that have obscured women’s war experiences are welcome. We also invite those that focus on African women’s agency in terms of their survival strategies and exploitation of the new opportunities—economic, political, educational, creative and artistic expressions—that are engendered by civil wars.

This conference also commemorates the 23rd anniversary of the 2000 adoption of United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which recognized women’s contributions in peacemaking and peacebuilding. African women have demonstrated their agency in prewar peacemaking, wartime peacekeeping and postwar peacebuilding, engaging in conflict prevention, and in reconciliation, reconstruction and transformation processes. Yet women’s voices and perspectives are often ignored and their contributions undervalued by peacebuilding practitioners and stakeholders. A key question the conference intends to interrogate is: to what extent have African women participated in peace talks and negotiations, and in formulating postwar plans for reconstruction and sustainable peace? The transformative nature of peacebuilding requires the contributions of both men and women, and their full representation in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. We welcome proposals that apply interdisciplinary gendered perspectives to analyze peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts in different conflict-zones in the continent as well as those that focus on women’s contributions to peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts at different arenas, including local grassroots, national, regional, continental, and global contexts.

We invite panel and individual paper proposals on but not limited to the following sub-themes:

1. Theories and methodological frameworks in researching and writing about African women and civil wars
2. Wartime conditions and gendered survival strategies
3. Women and genocides
4. Women, the military, and female combatants
5. Armed conflicts, gender and economic resources
6. Displacement, migration and female refugees
7. Women, wars and religion
8. Gender and humanitarian interventions
9. Wartime sites and forms of violence against women, and by women
10. Women, prewar, wartime and postwar politics and governance
11. Gender and wartime marriages
12. Gendered wartime human rights abuses and violations
13. Women, wars and technology
14. Psychology and trauma of wartime rapes, forced motherhood, and stigmatization
15. Armed conflicts, women’s rights and international legal instruments
16. Artistic, creative, literary, and media representations of women’s war experiences
17. Gender, memory, war memoirs and counter-narratives
18. Women in prewar peacemaking and postwar peacebuilding
19. Other related sub-themes



Submission Guidelines

Paper and panel proposals should include title, author full name(s), status, institutional affiliation, mailing and email addresses, phone number, and 250-300 words. We also need a bio of up to 200 words. Proposals and bios should be sent in MS Word format to afst-conference@umbc.edu no later than February 28, 2023. Final decision on proposal acceptance will be communicated to the authors from **late January 2023**.

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Registration Fees and Additional Information

Visit the conference website at <https://africanastudies.umbc.edu/conference/may-2023-african-women-civil-wars-and-peacebuilding/>

